

Quarterly

NEWS-LETTER

OF THE BOOK CLUB OF
CALIFORNIA

Volume II

MARCH 1935

Number 4

Published four times a year for its members by The Book Club of California, 110 Sutter St., San Francisco, Cal. Edited by Oscar Lewis.

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PRENTICE MULFORD

During the period shortly after the close of the Civil War, the work of a group of writers in and about San Francisco began to sound what readers and critics hailed as "a vitalizing new note in American literature." Among this group, the work of three men attracted particular attention. All were then in their early thirties, and two of the three—Mark Twain and Bret Harte—were at the beginning of long and distinguished careers.

The third never attained the fame of the other two, but he was so widely read during his lifetime, and his work was of such interest and quality, and is now of

such historical value, that his present obscurity is difficult to explain. Prentice Mulford today is hardly more than a name, even to those who have a special interest in the literature of the West. Yet he was unquestionably one of the most gifted of that group which, in the late '60s, was so successfully interpreting and dramatizing mining camp life as to claim the attention of the entire country. Twain's famous "Jumping Frog" and Harte's tremendously popular early stories in the *Overland* remain widely known today; Mulford's descriptive articles and humorous sketches of life in the diggings (where he spent six years) for the most part remain buried in the files of the California weeklies where they first appeared.

The Club's next publication, scheduled to appear late this spring, will be made up of a selection of the best of Prentice Mulford's California writings, collected and edited by Franklin Walker. The material, all previously unpublished in book form, has been selected from California and Eastern periodicals of the late '60s and early '70s. These contain some of the most interesting and authentic pictures of California life of the period ever written: humorous and satirical sketches, narratives of personal adventure in the Sierra towns and camps, and informing comment on men and manners in San Francisco in the '60s. Not the least valuable part of the book is Mr. Walker's introduction. This, the result of careful research, brings to light much hitherto unknown biographical material about Mulford, his personal enthusiasms and eccentricities, and his picturesque and highly varied career.

The Mulford book will probably appear in April. An announcement giving details as to price, edition, and printer, will reach members shortly.

THE LETTERS OF WESTERN AUTHORS

THE distribution of the Club's new series of monthly keepsakes began in January, and the first two parts are now in the hands of members. The first folder, which was designed and printed by The Grabhorn Press, contained a facsimile reproduction of a letter by George Sterling, with introductory text by Robinson Jeffers. This was followed in February by a letter of Bret Harte, with text by George R. Stewart, Jr. The design and printing were by The Windsor Press.

Number Three, to be distributed about March 15, will reproduce in facsimile an interesting and important Frank Norris letter. In it, Norris tells of his plan, then recently formed, to write a long novel about the wheat industry in California; a plan which, as everyone knows, resulted in the publication two years later of "The Octopus," one of America's greatest novels. The introductory text has been written by Franklin Walker, Norris's biographer, and the folder is being designed and printed by Johnck & Seeger.

In April will come Number Four of the series, reproducing an unpublished letter of Richard Henry Dana who, a century ago this year, visited the California coast on the voyage described in one of the most celebrated of all books on California, "Two Years Before the Mast." The Dana letter, written from San Diego in 1859, tells of the memories aroused by his return to the scenes described in his book after an absence of twenty-four years. James D. Hart, who is at work on a life of Dana, will supply the text for this folder, which will be designed and printed by Ward Ritchie of Los Angeles. Preparations for the remaining eight parts are under way and further announcements will be made from time to time.

A complete set of "The Letters of Western Authors" is supplied to each member without cost. Duplicate sets, at \$5.00 each, are offered to members as long as the fifty sets put aside for this purpose remain; about half of these have now been ordered.

Slipcases, uniform with those made to contain the California Mining Towns Series, have been designed and will be ready for delivery shortly. They are made in two styles of covering: all-cloth at \$2.00, and cloth with morocco back, \$3.00. The Club offers these purely as a convenience to members and derives no profit from their sale.

SAN FRANCISCO IN FICTION

by ANNE M. FARRELL

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following survey of the more important works of fiction having San Francisco for a background is one of a group planned to cover briefly special phases of Pacific Coast literature; the first was Francis P. Farquhar's "The Literature of the High Sierra," published in December. Miss Farrell is head of the Fiction Department of the San Francisco Public Library.

FICTIONALLY speaking, San Francisco is divided into four great epochs: the Spanish era, the Gold Rush days, the late 19th century, and the modern scene.

Few authors, however, have limited themselves to any one period. Gertrude Atherton, for example, in "Rezá-nov" (1906) uses the Presidio in the early part of the last century as a background for the tragic romance of Concha Argüello and the gallant Russian, Rezá-nov. In "The Californians" (1898) Mrs. Atherton turns for material to the society of the '70s. The emotional struggle between the daughter of a Spanish don and the beautiful American, Helena Belmont, for the affections of a young

Englishman is the plot in brief, but Mrs. Atherton weaves throughout her story a vivid, colorful thread of the life and manners of a new aristocracy.

So used have we become to associating Francis Bret Harte with the lore of the mining towns, and the Sonora district in particular, that we are apt to forget that he painted some vivid word pictures having San Francisco as a locale. An especially interesting example is a short sketch, "Bohemian Days in San Francisco," which, thinly veiled, is a description of the clash between respectability and lawlessness in the early days of the city. It is bound with other stories in the volume, "Under the Redwoods" (1901).

Probably one of the most powerful novelists America has produced is the lamented Frank Norris. With his passionate adherence to Zola for photographic detail, few writers have been able to achieve the grim realism that characterizes his "McTeague" (1899). "Blix" (1899) is in a lighter mood. A charming romance, it takes one into a Bohemian atmosphere that rings very true. "The Third Circle" (1909), a moving short story, gives title to a book of collected tales. It has a Chinatown background, and the extremely casual style of the story adds greatly to its swift, stark climax.

Many writers have found the fascination of Chinatown too strong to resist. But how greatly has the product of their pens varied! Two volumes are of particular interest. One by Chester Bailey Fernald, "The Cat and the Cherub" (1896) is a delightful collection of short stories, amusing and written with thorough understanding and sympathy of the strange mystery that is the Oriental mind. Quite different is C. W. Doyle's "The Shadow of Quong Lung" (1900). A sinister monster

kidnaps Chinese women, using the machinations of modern science to carry out his crimes. While "The Shadow of Quong Lung" has not the charm of "The Cat and the Cherub," it is an interesting bit of fiction of the more hair-raising school.

Almost all the men and women who have written of the "city of cool gray fogs" have regarded it with genuine affection which has been reflected in their works. This is true in no small measure of Jack London. His "Martin Eden" (1909), partly, at least, autobiographical, glows with enthusiastic descriptions of dim waterfront streets, and of the oddly assorted characters that haunt the streets after nightfall. The story concerns itself with the titanic emotional conflict between a pampered girl of a certain secure social background, and a man, elemental in his passions, impatient of ordinary conventions, but equipped with a magnificent intellect. He thrusts aside the minor annoyances of poverty and want in his valiant attempt to become a writer, only to be caught in the petty toils of stupid prejudice.

The trilogy of novels written by Stewart Edward White are valuable additions to the fictional annals of the city. The books were published singly but may now be had in a single volume under the title, "The Story of California." "Gold" (1913), the first of the trilogy is, of course, the story of the great rush westward for the precious metal. Naturally enough, the scene is more Californian than San Franciscan, but sufficient color of the city is included to give a suitable picture of the times. However, in the second volume, "The Gray Dawn" (1913) this author has produced one of the best novels yet to be published about the period of the Vigilantes and the attempt of the citizens to bring law and

order to the new city. "The Rose Dawn" (1920) completes the trilogy.

While a number of present-day writers have used the city as a motivating unit in their stories, others in their preoccupation with plot and action have treated it merely as a convenient place to "set" their novels—which then become stories that might equally well be placed in New York, London, or Paris. Contemporary writers who have effectively used peculiar characteristics of the city in their fiction include Peter B. Kyne—in his "Cappy Ricks" series—Kathleen Norris in a number of her romances, Charles Caldwell Dobie (whose "Less than Kin" [1926] takes for its outline a supposedly real fragment of life), Charles G. Norris, and Wallace Irwin. The latter's "Days of Her Life" (1930), has a well portrayed picture of life in the '80s. Ruth Comfort Mitchell's "Old San Francisco" (1933), a series of four thin volumes, presents the city at four different periods of its history. San Francisco stories that should be mentioned, though many of them are not well known to-day, include "The Itinerant House and Other Stories" (1897) by Emma Francis Dawson; "The Ape, the Idiot and Other People" (1897) by W. C. Morrow; "The Story of San Francisco's Chinatown" (1899) by Mary E. Bamford, and "The Heart Line" (1907) by Gelett Burgess. A number of Ambrose Bierce's powerful short stories make effective use of the San Francisco locale.

The list of novels, the major part of which are laid elsewhere but which have a chapter or two with a San Francisco background, is a lengthy one. Among these are several each by Jack London and Gertrude Atherton; Frank Norris's "Vandover and the Brute" (1914), "The Octopus" (1901), and "Moran and the Lady Letty"

(1898), and R. L. Stevenson's "The Wrecker" (1892). Three recent books in this classification that come to mind are Stella Benson's "The Poor Man" (1923), Clarkson Crane's "The Western Shore" (1925), and J. B. Priestly's "Faraway" (1932).

Space forbids further comment, but the collector who wishes to own a group of worth-while novels with a San Francisco background may well begin by selecting, according to his preferences, from among those mentioned. He will have no difficulty adding to the collection, for this list makes no claim to completeness. Except in a few cases, first editions of the titles mentioned are fairly easy to obtain and may be purchased for very moderate prices. The most desirable San Francisco novel from the standpoint of the first edition collector is Norris's "McTeague." After a limited number of copies of the first edition were printed, the presses were stopped and page 106 was rewritten—the first issue may be recognized by the words "the embarrassment of the moment" on the last line of that page. "McTeague," first issue, has sold as high as \$120, but recent quotations are much less.

¶ The 13th annual "Fifty Books of the Year" exhibition of The American Institute of Graphic Arts, which opened at the New York Public Library on February 5, contained an unprecedented number of books from the Pacific Coast, no less than 16 of the 50 having been designed and printed in California. Among the Western books so honored is the Club's edition of "The Heathen Chinee," printed by John Henry Nash and published shortly before Christmas. Members who did not then place orders are reminded that copies of this publication are still available, and that the price is \$15.00.

ELECTED TO MEMBERSHIP

The following names have been added to the roll since December 1:

<i>Member</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>
David Anderson	Bakersfield, Cal. Flodden W. Heron
Mrs. Frank H. Bennett	Palm Springs, Cal. T. M. Lilienthal
Mrs. Sanford Berenson	San Francisco, Cal. Garfield D. Merner
Jacob Blumlein	San Francisco, Cal. R. S. Shainwald
Mrs. Alfred L. Castle	Honolulu, T. H. Alfred Sutro
George E. Dane	San Francisco, Cal. Albert M. Bender
Robert Dohrmann	San Francisco, Cal. Albert M. Bender
The Huntington Library	San Marino, Cal. Secretary
Dr. J. Roy Jones	Sacramento, Cal. Secretary
Emmett P. Joy	San Francisco, Cal. Harold Haker
Lawrence Livingston	San Francisco, Cal. Albert M. Bender
Donald S. Maas	San Francisco, Cal. Jay Schwartz
Dr. Hyman Miller	Los Angeles, Cal. Garfield D. Merner
Winlock Miller, Jr.	Seattle, Wash. Otto L. Rupp
The New York Public Library	New York, N. Y. Secretary
Duncan H. Olmsted	Petaluma, Cal. Secretary
Mrs. George A. Oppen	San Francisco, Cal. Albert M. Bender
Karl G. Pfeiffer	Piggott, Arkansas G. A. Pfeiffer
Jay Schwartz	San Francisco, Cal. Secretary
Mrs. Sarah Bixby Smith	Los Angeles, Cal. Ward Ritchie
Mrs. Mary Spoor	San Francisco, Cal. Secretary
Julius Wangenheim	San Diego, Cal. Albert M. Bender

The Membership Committee thoroughly appreciates the cooperation of so many of the members who have interested themselves in the Club's effort to restore the roll to its maximum of 500. Members who have been intending to propose the names of friends are reminded that the Club plans to reach its goal of 500 during the present year, and that those who wish to join will appreciate having their names proposed before a full roll makes delay inevitable.

Among the definite advantages of submitting the names of candidates while vacancies still exist are these: Prompt election; the new member's participation in Club activities will begin at once. Assurance that he will receive a complete set of the current series of keepsakes, "The Letters of Western Authors"—as long as copies remain, he will be supplied on election with the parts already issued. Moreover, the added income the Club will derive from a full membership will permit greater service to all the members; the continuation and improvement of the monthly keepsakes, an enlarged News-Letter, and a more varied publishing program, with books issued more frequently and at lower cost to members.

The continued growth of the membership during the past year is gratifying evidence that the Club is performing a worth-while function; that booklovers and collectors welcome the opportunity to join, once the Club's activities are brought to their attention. Will you not now—while there are still vacancies on the roll—use the enclosed card to propose a new member, or to supply the name of an interested prospect?

NOTES ON PUBLICATIONS

by ALBERT M. BENDER, Chairman, Publication Committee

IN addition to the collection of Prentice Mulford's California sketches, announced in this number of the quarterly, several desirable Club publications are in prospect for 1935. Although a final decision on these has not been reached, they are mentioned here in order that members may be informed of the Club's publication plans. Comment on their desirability as Club publications is cordially invited.

The Committee now has under consideration an interesting and informative collection of comment on events in California during the middle '60s, written by Bret Harte to two Eastern newspapers for which he was then acting as San Francisco correspondent. Not only has this material remained unpublished in book form; it has until recently been entirely unknown to bibliographers and collectors of Harte's works. The material has been assembled by George R. Stewart, Jr., of the University of California, who is to contribute an introduction to the book.

Another proposed publication is a bibliographical study of Mark Twain's "Huck Finn," which embodies some important and highly interesting information relating to the first publication of this American classic. This work has a particular interest to Western collectors because of the part played by the "California copies" in determining the true first edition of the book.

In connection with the three proposed publications above mentioned, it is interesting to note that Prentice Mulford was born in 1834, Twain in 1835, and Harte in 1836. Thus, the publication of each of the three books would fall on, or near, the centenary year of its author's birth.

In addition to the above projects, the Committee hopes that one or more of the books previously announced but for one reason or another delayed, will make their appearance during 1935. These include "Early Polynesian Printing," a history of the pioneer press of the South Seas, with a bibliography of its publications, by George L. Harding, and "The Everett Letters to Dame Shirley," edited by Carl I. Wheat.

In past issues of the News-Letter, short descriptions

of some of the Club's earlier publications have been printed for the information of recent members. Here I shall add a brief comment on George Sterling's "Lilith," published in 1920. Generally regarded as the finest of Sterling's dramatic poems, "Lilith" is one of the major achievements on which the poet's fame chiefly rests. In his introduction to a new edition, published in 1926, Theodore Dreiser has this to say about the poem: "It is compact of a noble and haunting sense of beauty. At the same time, because of its modernity as to astronomical truth, as well as its conception of pleasure and pain as the two realities, it rings richer in thought than any American dramatic poem of which I am familiar." The Club's edition is a small octavo of 84 pages, printed by Taylor & Taylor from Caslon Old Style type, hand-set, on Fabriano hand-made paper, and is bound in decorated boards with linen back. Of the edition of 350 copies, a few are available to members, at \$6.00 each.

Miscellany

¶ That the facsimile letters in the Club's Western Authors series are faithful copies of their originals is indicated by the following unsolicited testimonial from the Post Office Department. Recently one of the folders, which had been incorrectly addressed, was returned to the Club with this notation on the envelope: "Handwriting inside. First Class Mail. Postage due: 12¢."

¶ This number completes Volume II of the News-Letter. During the past year, a number of members have commented on the interest of the articles on Western printing and book collecting, one of which has appeared in each of the last four numbers. Much interesting material of this type is available; only lack of space prevents the publication of several such articles in each number. A further increase in the size of the quarterly is planned as soon as the Club's income justifies the additional expense.